

# DIRECTIONS

TO

## PENITENTS AND BELIEVERS

FOR  
THE USE OF THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND

COVENANTING WITH GOD.

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READ IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE AT THE BEGIN-  
NING OF THE YEAR.

## DIRECTIONS, &c.

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I. GET these three principles fixed in your heart : That things eternal are much more considerable than things temporal ; that things not seen are as certain as the things that are seen ; that upon your present choice depends your eternal lot. Choose Christ and His ways, and you are blessed for ever : refuse, and you are undone for ever. And then,

### II. Make your choice.

Turn either to the right hand or to the left ; lay both parts before you, with every link of each ; Christ with His yoke, His cross, and His crown ; or, the devil, with his wealth, his pleasure, and curse. And then put yourselves to it thus : "Soul, thou seest what is before thee : what wilt thou do ? Which wilt thou have, either the crown or the curse ? If thou choosest the crown, remember that the day thou takest this thou must be content to submit to the cross and yoke, the service and the sufferings of Christ, which are linked to it. What sayest thou ? Hadst thou rather take the gains and pleasures of sin, and venture on the curse ? Or wilt thou yield thyself a servant to Christ, and so make sure of the crown ?"

If your hearts fly off, and would fain waive the business, leave them not so. If you be unresolved, you are resolved ; if you remain undetermined for Christ, you are determined for the devil. Therefore, give not off, but allow your hearts from day to day ; let them not rest till the matter be brought to an issue : and see that you make a good choice.

This is your choosing the good part, God and the blessedness of the world to come, for your portion and happiness ; and in this is included your renouncing the world, and worldly happiness.

### III. Embark with Christ.

Adventure yourselves with Him; cast yourselves upon His righteousness, as that which shall bring you to God. As a poor captive exile that is cast upon a strange land, a land of robbers and murderers, where he is ready to perish, and having no hope, either of abiding there, or of escaping home with life; and meeting at length with a pilot, that offers to transport him safely home, he embarks with him, and ventures himself, and all he hath, in his vessel; do you likewise. You are exiles from the presence of God, and fallen into the hand of robbers and murderers: your sins are robbers, your pleasures are robbers, your companions in sin are robbers and thieves. If you stay where you are, you perish; and escape home of yourself you cannot. Christ offers, if you will venture with Him, He will bring you home, He will bring you to God. Will you now say to Him, "Lord Jesus, wilt Thou undertake for me? Wilt Thou bring me to God, bring me into the Land of Promise? With Thee will I venture myself; I cast myself upon Thee, upon Thy blood, upon Thy righteousness: I lay up all my hopes, and venture my whole interest, soul and body, with Thee."

This is closing with Christ as your Priest. And in this is included your renouncing your own righteousness. You can never, you will never, cast yourselves on Him alone, till all your hopes in yourselves have given up the ghost.

There are two things which must necessarily be supposed, in order to a sinner's coming to Christ:—

1. A deep sense of his sin and misery.
2. An utter despair of himself, and all things else besides Christ.

#### 1. A deep sense of sin and misery.

No man will regard a Saviour, that doth not see himself a sinner: the whole regard not the physician. Therefore, it is said, that the Spirit of God, when He should come, should, in the first place, "convince the world of sin." (John xvi. 8.) He shall convince the world of sin: He shall demonstrate them sinners, bring up their sins before their eyes; bring home their sins upon their consciences, and make them see them, and feel



themselves most vile and filthy. Sin hides itself from the sinner's eyes, and all its vileness and deformity. But the Spirit of God plucks off the mantle, and makes sin appear to be sin; makes all the sinner's gods appear to be as so many devils; brings forth the blackness and filthiness of sin into sight, and makes the sinner see himself an unclean and abominable creature; and, withal, He brings forth the guilt of sin, awakens the sinner's conscience, and fills him with fear, terror, and amazement. In this respect He is called the Spirit of bondage, that works fear and trouble in the heart. The Spirit's awakening a sleepy sinner is a kind of awaking in hell. "Lord, what am I? What mean these legions round about me? these chains and fetters that are upon me? What means this black roll before mine eyes, of curses, and wrath, and woes? Lord, where am I? Have I been playing, and sporting, and making merry, and my soul in such a case as this? But is there no hope of escaping out of this wretched state? I see there is no abiding thus. I am but a dead man, if I continue as I am. What must I do to be saved?"

When he is brought to this, there is some way made for his entertainment with Christ: yet this is not all that is needful, but he must further be brought to,

2. An utter despair of himself, and all things else without Christ.

Being made sensible of his sin, and his danger, a sinner will look for help and deliverance; but he will look everywhere else, before he will look unto Christ. Nothing will bring a sinner to Christ, but absolute necessity. He will try to forsake his sins, and to see if by these means he may escape. He will have recourse to prayers, and sermons, and sacraments, and search if there be not salvation in them. But all these, though they be useful in their places, and indeed necessary; yet, looking no further, the sinner sees there is no salvation in them. His righteousness cannot save him; this is but rags: his duties cannot save him; these may be reckoned among his sins: ordinances cannot save him; these are but empty cisterns; and all tell him, "You knock at a wrong door: salvation is not in us." "Well, the Lord be merciful to me," saith the sinner. "What shall I do? Abide as I am I dare not,

and how to help myself I know not: my praying will not save me; my hearing will not; if I give all my goods to the poor, if I should give my body to be burned, all this would not save my soul. Woe is me! what shall I do, and whither shall I go?"

And now, being brought to this distress, to this utter loss, his despair drives him to the only door of hope that is left open. Then Christ will be acceptable, when he sees none but Christ can save him. The apostle tells us, we are "kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." (Gal. iii. 23.) All other doors were shut up against us; there was no hope of escaping but by that one door which was left open, the faith that was afterwards to be revealed. As the besieged in a city, that have every gate blocked up, and but one difficult passage left open by which there is any possibility of escaping, thither throng for the saving of their lives; they are shut up unto that door, to which (if there had been any other way open) they would never have come.

As Christ will never be accepted, so can the sinner never be received of Him, till he lets go all other props, and trusts in Him alone. Christ will have no sharer with Him in the work of saving souls. "If ye seek me, let these go their way," as He said in another case: let not only your sins go, but all dependence on your righteousness, all the refuge of lies wherein you have trusted; let all go, if you will have me to be a refuge to you. I came not to call the righteous: if I should, they would not come; or if they come, let them go as they came, let them go to their righteousness in which they trust; and let naked, destitute sinners, distressed sinners, come to me; who am come to this end, to seek and to save them that are lost.

Sinners, will you come now? Will you venture here? For this your adventuring on Christ, you have this threefold warrant:—

1. God's ordination. This is He whom God the Father hath appointed, and sent into the world, to bring back His exiles to Himself, to save sinners.

This is He whom God the Father hath sealed; hath marked Him out for that chosen Person in whom is salvation; hath sealed Him His commission, for the redeeming and reconciling the world to Himself. "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." (Isaiah xlii. 1.)

As God said unto the three friends of Job, when He was angry with them, "Go to my servant Job,...and shall pray for you; for him will I accept;" (Job xlii. 8;) so to sinners: Go, saith the Lord, to my Servant Jesus; He shall offer sacrifice for you, He shall make reconciliation for you.

2. God's command: "This is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." (1 John iii. 23.)

3. The promise of God: "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." (1 Pet. ii. 6.)

Now, having this threefold warrant,—the warrant of God's ordination, command, and promise,—you may be bold to adventure on Christ, and to apply yourselves to Him thus:—"Lord Jesus, here I am, a poor captive exile, a lost creature, an enemy to God, under His wrath and curse. Wilt Thou, Lord, undertake for me, reconcile me to God, and save my soul? Do not, Lord, refuse me; for, if Thou refuse me, to whom then shall I go? Art not Thou He, and He alone, whom God the Father hath sealed, the Saviour of sinners? The Lord God hath sent me to Thee, hath bid me come; He hath commanded me to believe, and cast myself upon Thee. Lord Jesus, wilt Thou refuse to help a distressed creature, whom the Father hath sent to thee for Thy help? If I had come in my own name, Thou mightest well have put me back: but, since I come at the command of the Father, reject me

not. Lord, help me! Lord, save me! Art Thou not He concerning whom the Father hath promised, 'He that believeth on Him shall not be confounded?' I come, Lord; I believe, Lord; I throw myself upon Thy grace and mercy; do not refuse me! I have not whither else to go. Here I will stay, I will not stir from Thy door; on Thee will I trust, and rest, and venture myself. God hath laid my help on Thee, and on Thee I lay my hope for pardon, for life, for salvation. If I perish, I perish on Thy shoulders; if I sink, I sink in Thy vessel: if I die, I die at Thy door. Bid me not go away, for I will not go."

#### IV. Resign and deliver up yourselves to God in Christ.

"Yield yourselves to the Lord," that is, as His servants; give up the dominion and government of yourselves to Christ. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God....To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, His servants ye are to whom ye obey." Yield yourselves so to the Lord, that you may henceforth be the Lord's. "I am Thine," saith the Psalmist. Those that yield themselves to sin and the world, their heart says, "Sin, I am thine; world, I am thine; riches, I am yours; pleasures, I am yours." "I am Thine," saith the Psalmist; devoted to Thy fear, dedicated to Thy service: "I am Thine; save me." Give yourselves to Christ, sinners; be devoted to His fear.

And this giving yourselves to Him must be such as supposes that you be heartily contented,—

1. That He appoint you your work.
2. That He appoint you your station.

That He appoint you your work: That He put you to whatsoever He pleaseth. Servants, as they must do their master's work, so they must do that



work which their master appoints them; they must be for any work their master hath for them to do. They must not pick and choose: "This I will do, and that I will not do." They must not say, "This is too hard," or, "This is too mean," or, "This may be well enough let alone." Good servants, when they have chosen their master, will let their master choose their work; and will not dispute his will, but do it.

Christ hath many services to be done: some are more easy and honourable, others more difficult and disgraceful; some are suitable to our inclinations and interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ, and please ourselves; as, when He requires us to feed and clothe ourselves, to provide things honest for our own maintenance. Yea, and there are some spiritual duties that are more pleasing than others; as, to rejoice in the Lord, to be blessing and praising of God, to be feeding ourselves with the delights and comforts of religion: these are the sweet works of a Christian. But then there are other works, wherein we cannot please Christ but by denying ourselves; as, giving and lending, bearing and forbearing, reproving men for their sins, withdrawing from their company, witnessing against their wickedness, confessing Christ and His name when it will cost us shame and reproach; sailing against the wind, swimming against the tide, steering contrary to the times; parting with our ease, our liberties, and our accommodations, for the name of our Lord Jesus.

It is necessary, beloved, to sit down, and consider what it will cost you to be the servants of Christ, and take a thorough survey of the whole business of Christianity, and not to engage thoughtlessly to you know not what.

First, see what it is that Christ doth expect, and then yield yourselves to His whole will. Do not think of compounding, or making your own terms with Christ: that will never be allowed you.

Go to Christ, and tell Him, "Lord Jesus, if Thou wilt receive me into Thine house, if Thou wilt but own me as Thy servant, I will not stand upon terms. Impose upon me what conditions Thou pleasest, write

down Thine own articles, command me what Thou wilt, put me to anything Thou seest good ; let me come under Thy roof, let me be Thy servant, and spare not to command me : I will be no longer mine own, but give up myself to Thy will in all things."

2. Let Him appoint you your station and condition ; whether it be higher or lower, a prosperous or an afflicted state. Be content that Christ should both choose your work and choose your condition ; that He should have the command of you, and the disposal of you : "Make me what Thou wilt, Lord, and set me where Thou wilt ; let me be a vessel of silver or gold, or a vessel of wood or stone, so I be a vessel of honour : of whatsoever form or metal, whether higher or lower, finer or coarser, I am content. If I be not the head, or the eye, or the ear, one of the nobler and more honourable instruments Thou wilt employ, let me be the hand, or the foot, one of the most laborious, and lowest, and most contemptible of all the servants of my Lord : let my dwelling be in the dust, my portion in the wilderness, my name and lot amongst the hewers of wood or drawers of water, among the door-keepers of Thy house ; anywhere, where I may be serviceable. I put myself wholly into Thy hands : put me to what Thou wilt, rank me with whom Thou wilt ; put me to doing, put me to suffering ; let me be employed for Thee, or laid aside for Thee ; exalted for Thee, or trodden under foot for Thee ; let me be full, let me be empty ; let me have all things, let me have nothing ; I freely and heartily resign all to Thy pleasure and disposal."

This is closing with Christ as your King and sovereign Lord : and in this is included your renouncing the devil and all his works, the flesh and its lusts ; together with your consenting to all the laws and ordinances of Christ, and His providential government.

Beloved, such an agreement with Christ as you have here been exhorted to is that wherein the

essence of Christianity lies. When you have chosen the incorruptible crown; that is, when you have chosen God to be your portion and happiness; when you have adventured, and laid up your whole interest and all your hopes with Christ, casting yourself wholly upon His merits; when you have understandingly and heartily resigned and given up yourselves to Him, resolving for ever to be at His command, and at His disposal; then you are Christians indeed, and never till then. Christ will be the Saviour of none but His servants. He is the Author of eternal salvation to those that obey Him. Christ will have no servants but by consent. His people are a willing people; and He will accept of no consent but in full to all He requires. He will be all in all, or He will be nothing.

V. Confirm and complete all this by solemn covenant.

Give yourselves to the Lord as His servants, and bind yourselves to Him as His covenant-servants.

Upon your entering into covenant with God, the covenant of God stands firm to you. God gives you leave, every man, to put in his own name into the covenant-grant. If it be not found there at last, it will be your own fault; if it be not there, there will be nothing found in the whole covenant belonging unto you: if it be there, all is yours; if you have come into the bond of the covenant, you shall have your share in the blessings of the covenant. "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and to hearken unto His voice: and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee." (Deut. xxvi. 17, 18.) Observe it. The same day that they avouched the Lord to be their God, the same day the Lord avouched them to be His peculiar people. The same day that they engaged to keep the commandments of God, the



same day the Lord engageth to keep His promise with them.

There is a two-fold covenanting with God. In *profession* or in *reality*; an entering our names, or an engaging our hearts. The former is done in baptism, by all that are baptized; who, by receiving that seal of the covenant, are visibly, or in profession, entered into it. The latter is also twofold.

1. VIRTUAL. Which is done by all those that have sincerely made that closure with God in Christ which we have spoken of. Those that have chosen the Lord, embarked with Christ, resigned up and given themselves to the Lord, are all engaged persons, and have virtually covenanted with Him.

2. FORMAL. Which is our binding ourselves to the Lord by solemn vow or promise to stand to our choice. And this may be, either only inward, in the soul; or outward, and expressed either by word, lifting up of the hands, subscribing the hand, or the like. And by how much the more express and solemn our covenanting with God is, by so much the more sensibly and strongly is it likely to hold our hearts to Him.

Now, that which we would persuade you to, is this solemn and express covenanting with God; and, first, in order to the putting this matter into practice, take these few directions:—

1. Seek earnestly His special assistance, and gracious acceptance of you.

2. Consider distinctly all the conditions of the covenant, as they have been laid before you.

3. Search your hearts, whether you either have already made, or can now freely make, such a closure with God in Christ as you have been exhorted to. Especially consider what your sins are, and examine whether you can resolve to forego them all. Consider what the laws of Christ are, how holy, strict, and spiritual; and whether you can, upon deliberation, make choice of them all, (even those that most cross your interests and corrupt inclinations,)



as the rule of your whole life. Be sure you be clear in these matters ; see that you do not lie unto God.

Secondly, Compose your spirits into the most serious frame possible, suitable to a transaction of so high importance.

Thirdly, Lay hold on the covenant of God, and rely upon His promise of giving grace and strength, whereby you may be enabled to perform your promise. Trust not to your own strength, to the strength of your own resolutions ; but take hold on His strength.

Fourthly, Resolve to be faithful. Having engaged your hearts, opened your mouths, and subscribed with your hands to the Lord, resolve in His strength never to go back.

Lastly, Being thus prepared, set upon the work ; and in the most solemn manner possible, as if the Lord were visibly present before your eyes, fall down on your knees, and, spreading forth your hands towards heaven, open your lips to the Lord, in these or the like words :—

O most dreadful God ! for the passion of Thy Son, I beseech thee, accept of Thy poor prodigal now prostrating himself at Thy door. I have fallen from Thee by mine iniquity, and am by nature a son of death, and a thousand-fold more the child of hell by my wicked practice : but of Thine infinite grace Thou hast promised mercy to me in Christ, if I will but turn to Thee with all my heart. Therefore, upon the call of Thy gospel, I am now come in ; and, throwing down my weapons, submit myself to Thy mercy.

And because Thou requirest, as the condition of my peace with Thee, that I should put away mine idols, and be at defiance with all Thine enemies, (which I acknowledge I have wickedly sided with against Thee,) I here, from the bottom of my heart, renounce them all ; firmly covenanting with Thee

not to allow myself in any known sin, but conscientiously to use all the means that I know Thou hast prescribed for the death and utter destruction of all my corruptions. And whereas, formerly, I have inordinately and idolatrously let out my affections upon the world, I do here resign my heart to Thee that madest it; humbly protesting before Thy glorious Majesty, that it is the firm resolution of my heart, and that I do unfeignedly desire grace from Thee, that, when Thou shalt call me hereunto, I may practise this my resolution, to forsake all that is dear unto me in this world, rather than turn from Thee to the ways of sin; and that I will watch against all its temptations, whether of prosperity or adversity, lest they should withdraw my heart from Thee; beseeching Thee also to help me against the temptations of Satan, to whose wicked suggestions I resolve, by Thy grace, never to yield. And because my own righteousness is but filthy rags, I renounce all confidence therein; and acknowledge that I am of myself a hopeless, helpless, undone creature, without righteousness or strength.

And forasmuch as Thou hast, of Thy bottomless mercy, offered most graciously to me, wretched sinner, to be again my God through Christ, if I would accept of Thee; I call heaven and earth to record this day, that I do here solemnly avouch Thee for the Lord my God; and, with all possible veneration bowing the neck of my soul under the feet of Thy most sacred Majesty, I do here take Thee, the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for my portion; and do give up myself, body and soul, for Thy servant; promising and vowing to serve Thee, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of my life.

And since Thou hast appointed the Lord Jesus Christ the only means of coming unto Thee, I do here, upon the bended knees of my soul, accept of Him, as the only new and living way by which sinners may have access to Thee; and do here

solemnly join myself in a perpetual covenant to Him.

O blessed Jesus, I come to Thee hungry, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked ; a most loathsome, polluted wretch, a guilty, condemned malefactor, unworthy to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord, much more to be solemnly united to the King of Glory : but, since such is Thine unparalleled love, I here, with all my power, accept Thee, and take Thee for my Head and Husband, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, for all times and conditions, to love, honour, and obey Thee before all others, and this to the death. I embrace Thee in all Thine offices : I renounce my own worthiness, and do here avow Thee for the Lord my Righteousness : I renounce mine own wisdom, and do here take Thee for my only Guide : I renounce mine own will, and take Thy will for my law.

And since Thou hast told me I must suffer if I will reign, I do here covenant with Thee, to take my lot as it falls with Thee, and, by Thy grace assisting, to run all hazards with Thee ; verily purposing, that neither life nor death shall part between Thee and me.

And because Thou hast been pleased to give me Thy holy laws as the rule of my life, and the way in which I should walk to Thy kingdom, I do here willingly put my neck under Thy yoke, and set my shoulder to Thy burden ; and, subscribing to all Thy laws, as holy, just, and good, I solemnly take them as the rule of my words, thoughts, and actions : promising that, though my flesh contradict and rebel, I will endeavour to order and govern my whole life according to Thy direction, and will not allow myself in the neglect of anything that I know to be my duty.

Now, Almighty God, Searcher of hearts, Thou knowest that I make this covenant with Thee this day without any known guile or reservation ; beseeching Thee, if Thou espiest any flaw or falsehood



therein, Thou wouldest discover it to me, and help me to do it aright.

And now, glory be to Thee, O God the Father, whom I shall be bold from this day forward to look upon as my God and Father; that ever Thou shouldest find out such a way for the recovery of undone sinners. Glory be to Thee, O God the Son, who hast loved me, and washed me from my sins in Thine own blood, and art now become my Saviour and Redeemer. Glory be to Thee, O God the Holy Ghost, who, by the finger of Thine almighty power, hast turned about my heart from sin to God.

O dreadful Jehovah, the Lord God omnipotent, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Thou art now become my Covenant-Friend; and I, through Thy infinite grace, am become Thy covenant-servant. Amen. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

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This covenant we advise you to make, not only in heart, but in word; not only in word, but in writing; and that you would with all possible reverence spread the writing before the Lord, as if you would present it to Him as your act and deed. And, when you have done this, set your hand to it: keep it as a memorial of the solemn transactions that have passed between God and you, that you may have recourse to it in doubts and temptations.

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